

Karen A. Flahie  
11164 Hieber Road  
Manchester, Michigan 48158  
January 26, 2006

There is much concern by the citizens of Michigan about groundwater usage which presently is not regulated at all. I testified at the Senate hearings in November and was pleased that the Senate passed bills that show some promise towards protecting our most precious natural resource. The promises for 20 years to do this seem to be coming to fruition, but it is imperative that we do it right.

I am here today because of potential harm that may come to the lake that I live on, a lake my family loves, and a lake that is a spring-fed kettle lake with 20 or so acres of wetlands that has been around since the glaciers. This may disappear because a gravel pit wants to expand mining operations which would create a close to 200 acre 140 foot deep lake about ½ mile from the natural lake. This issue only brings to the forefront the need in Michigan to have clear legislation that will protect our lakes, streams, and rivers from abuse and misuse by large water users. Water is our states most precious natural resource. Without clean safe drinking water, what good are jobs when we can't live here? We cannot afford to be pennywise and pound foolish—protecting businesses and jobs for now, but not the quality and quantity of the water, now and in the future, that ultimately supports them.

Last week Freedom Township Board and the Planning Commission held a presentation by Robert Hayes, principle hydrogeologist from GEOForensics on groundwater and groundwater recharging. Mr. Hayes did a wonderful job of explaining in layman's terms what groundwater is, how it got there, how it flows and how man's activities, such as well withdrawals, affects it. It was very interesting and yet at the same time frightening. For all the research and understanding we have now, it seems to me that there really is no way to positively prove what an impact water diversion or withdrawal will have on an area. I one thing that I came away from that meeting is realizing that all water is connected in a large underground web and we all share it. And what one does on one's property very much affect others, not only those close but, in some cases, many miles down the line.

So many examples of these detrimental impacts to our environment from overuse of water resources have been in the news: rock mining quarries in Monroe County extracting so much water that it dried up area wells, irrigation increases in Saginaw County causing wells to go dry, a gravel pit in Groveland Township increased water usage drying up wells, ponds, killing trees, and creating sinkholes, let alone the Gelman disaster, just to name a few.

We need to be proactive about groundwater usage and prevent these terrible events from happening again and again in our state. We need to make sure that large user of our groundwater prove that they will not harm our water resources before they are allowed to

proceed with what may turn out to be devastating and irreparable harm to water resources in the area. If the lake I live on dries up because of water withdrawal or diversion, I should be protected. But, ultimately this should NEVER happen in the first place because what if you cannot repair the damage? What happens to the value of those property owner's homes? What happens to the wetlands and all the wildlife that depend on that wetland? What happens to the homes when the residential wells go dry and it is impossible to drill new ones? The burden of proof of harm done should not be on the citizens. These businesses tell us what they are doing will not cause any damage. If that is true, they should be willing to "put their money where their mouth is"; that is to be held responsible if any damage ensues as a result of their actions

I urge you to keep our water safe and abundant, and in the process, keep our little lake healthy. Make sure there is strong water usage legislation by amending the adverse resource impact of water withdrawal to include natural resources located on people's private property, ensure standard accepted water conservation practices, and keep our water in our Great Lake State.